

Know Yourself and Your Mission

Knowing yourself on a deep level is critical to being able to not only withstand life's challenges but actually grow from them. We know that through our lifetime we are going to face good and bad times: what will make a major difference in those times is how well we know ourselves and the meaning we attach to those events.

Let's start with this perhaps surprising fact: your level of affluence will not help your state of mind when difficult times come. It has been proven that material possessions have no power to boost our happiness after we suffer an event such as a job loss, business collapse or a death of a loved one. Things such as money, property and cars quickly lose their special significance and become just an accepted part of our lives and as a result they offer no ability to protect our state of mind when challenges arise.

We don't just work in order to make money and the things it can buy; we work to create meaning in our lives. So when we lose our job or business we lose much more than an income stream. Even if you had more than enough money and all of your needs were covered for the next decade, the loss of purpose and meaning that you suffer from a job loss would most likely leave you feeling depressed and anxious. Tragically, for some people this loss is so overwhelming that it leaves them feeling the only option left is to take their own life.

What do we need to do to know ourselves and prepare for unforeseen events? We need to understand our true purpose, or put another way, to develop a personal mission statement. To create our personal mission statement, we need to look within and discover our purpose; what brings us joy and fulfilment at our core. It is very important that when we seek our purpose we avoid the mistake of trying to *imagine* what it is, simply because what we think it *should* be is often influenced by others expectations or an external image that we think we need to live up to rather than something that comes from within. Although we may try hard to arouse enthusiasm for a purpose identified in this way, if we are trying to force ourselves to feel passionate about something that deep down we don't really identify with it will be a constant battle and lead to a lack of joy and satisfaction in our lives.

We already know on a deep cellular level what provides us joy and meaning in our lives, we just need to take the time to reflect and recognise it from within.

Your true purpose may or may not be related to the career you have chosen at present. But let's say that it is for you. Say you are a teacher and believe that is your purpose in life. What may be underpinning that role is a mission to *help children to learn and grow*. Now if you lost your job as a teacher and couldn't find another job as a teacher, are there other ways to help children to learn and grow? Of course there are, but if you have confused your mission with your current career you may not be able to see those other opportunities. By having a deeper understanding of your mission you will be more likely to be able to identify other potential roles that will allow you to fulfill that mission and thus be able to bring a more positive and empowered mindset to dealing with your change in circumstances.

So how do we go about identifying our true purpose? Have you ever noticed how when you spend time doing something you really love or talking to someone on a topic you're passionate about the time just disappears? This is because when you're engaged in

activities that are well aligned with your true purpose you are living completely in the moment. Can you name a few activities or subjects that have this effect on you? If not, then start becoming more conscious of observing the situations in which you can find hours seem to go by in the blink of an eye and contrast those experiences to the ones where you find yourself checking your watch every few minutes wondering if it is ever going to end.

Identifying the activities or subjects that truly move you is a first step to discovering your true purpose. The activities themselves are not your true purpose but are the current best manifestations of it and will lead you in the right direction to discover it. These observations also provide an insight as to why understanding your true purpose is so valuable. We all need to spend as much time as possible living in the moment to nourish our spirit and find happiness and fulfilment.

Here are a couple techniques for drilling down to that next level:

Observation and analysis

Start taking conscious note of the activities you easily become absorbed in for hours, and subjects you can talk about endlessly with great passion. Think back to five years ago, ten years ago - what were your 'hot topics' and favoured activities then? What is the common underlying thread between those and your current favourite pastimes? It may not be immediately obvious but it will be there if you dig deep enough, so keep asking yourself questions until it becomes apparent.

Brainstorming

Set aside some quiet time and arm yourself with a pen and paper or computer. Centre yourself in your heart by focusing on your breathing for a few minutes, and then consciously set your intention of identifying your true purpose. Start writing or drawing, whichever comes more naturally to you, whatever thoughts or images come to you. Let ideas flow, don't stop to examine them initially, just let them keep flowing freely. Highlight those that resonate most strongly with you. When you reach the one that touches you to your very core you have found your true purpose. You will feel a deep sense of recognition and peace and calm in your heart. You may find that you will be moved to tears by the moment of realisation. Ideally stick with this in a single session until you reach the moment of realisation, but if you aren't able to get there first time then don't hesitate to come back and try again. It can take time for us to breakdown the years of conditioning and societal influence and really be able to open ourselves to hearing our inner voice.

Understanding your true purpose isn't going to stop undesired events from happening, it won't prevent grief and sadness, but it will provide a solid foundation from which to face difficult events and rebuild. Understanding your true purpose will allow you to grow, evolve and expand through both good and bad times because it unlocks the meaning in your life.

Remember this, a teacher may lose their job at any time, but the core mission to *help*

children learn and grow will endure regardless, and the teaching job was really only one of many possible strategies that allowed the fulfilment of that mission. There are many other strategies.

Once you understand your true purpose and the fact that there are many possible ways to fulfill it, you will know yourself on a much more powerful level and you will become stronger and more resilient to life's challenges. You will be more able to see the opportunity in any circumstance, even those that at first may seem to be negative.

Don't worry if you haven't yet been able to identify your true purpose. You can still start to transform your life just by increasing that awareness of the topics and activities that most enliven and excite you and using this knowledge to guide your life. Look for opportunities to increase the amount of time you are able to spend on those things you are passionate about and decrease the amount of time and effort going into those things that you get no enjoyment from. You may not be able to make a complete change of life overnight for practical reasons but you can start making steps in the right direction and increase your awareness of the opportunities you are looking for. The more awareness you have of what you want the more likely you are to find opportunities to get it.

The things you enjoy doing, the things that you feel passionate about, that can move you emotionally and feel good in every way are the things that make you happy, bring you fulfilment, give you peace. The more closely aligned your external life is to your internal priorities and values and to your true purpose, the more at peace you will be and the greater sense of joy and fulfilment you will find in life even when difficult times arise.